Office of the President
May 8, 2002

TO MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATIONAL POLICY:

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION

For Meeting of May 15, 2002

ADMISSIONS TESTING

On January 30, 2002, the Board of Admissions and Relations with Schools (BOARS) presented to the Academic Council a discussion paper on admissions testing policy. Over the past several months, the Academic Council and other faculty bodies have focused extensive attention on this paper and it has also been discussed widely throughout the University community—including by The Regents, who held a special session on this topic on March 12.

At today's meeting, Academic Council Chair Chand Viswanathan and BOARS Chair Dorothy Perry will update The Regents on the discussions of the past several months. In addition, the Board will hear presentations from representatives of the nation's two primary admissions testing companies, ACT, Inc. and the College Board. Both of these organizations have been meeting regularly with the members of BOARS. They will describe the current state of their planning with regard to developing admissions tests to be used by the University of California.

Over the past fifteen months, BOARS has undertaken an intensive study of admissions testing at the University. In its January 2002 discussion paper, BOARS endorsed the continued use of admissions tests at UC and proposed a set of principles on which it believes the University should base its use of admissions tests. The effect of these principles is to endorse the adoption by the University of improved admissions tests that measure academic preparation and the critical thinking skills necessary to succeed in college, in the context of a rigorous college preparatory curriculum.

In the months since BOARS presented its paper, faculty members have discussed the issues related to improved admissions tests in meetings of the Academic Council and both campus divisional and Universitywide faculty committees devoted to admissions and educational policy. In addition, at the suggestion of the Academic Council, campuses have held "Town Hall" meetings on the subject, designed to ensure broad faculty awareness of and participation in the decision-making process related to the adoption of a new admissions testing policy. These conversations have been thoughtful, thorough, and wide-ranging. At its April 24 meeting, the Academic Council passed resolutions endorsing BOARS' goal of seeking improved admissions tests and its continued work in this area with the testing agencies.

The primary purpose of this discussion is to bring The Regents up to date on BOARS' work with ACT, Inc. and the College Board. BOARS and its Testing Subcommittee have met extensively with representatives of both agencies and have worked through the properties that BOARS considers essential in improved admissions tests. Both agencies have been very responsive to the University's concerns and have developed proposals, which they will present, for new tests more closely aligned to BOARS' principles. These proposals specifically address BOARS' recommendations that UC admissions tests measure academic achievement and preparation in the content of curriculum; that they provide for broader coverage of the college preparatory curriculum; that they provide useful feedback to students and schools; that they continue to be good predictors of academic success at the University; and that they not impose additional burdens on prospective applicants.

The key features of the two proposals are displayed in tabular form in the attached matrix. In addition, letters containing brief summaries of each agency's current plans are also attached.

(Attachments: Matrix; ACT: College Board)